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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/48/25) (Supplement No. 25), A/48/451 and Corr.1; A/48/272-S/26108; A/48/552; A/C.2/48/2, A/C.2/48/6)

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(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

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(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/48/479)

1. Mrs. PIETIKÄINEN (Finland) said it was necessary to speed up the integration of the environment and development in order to implement the decisions of the Earth Summit. In the light of the expectations aroused by the Rio Conference, the results of the first High-level Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development were encouraging, and its dynamic role should be promoted by the use of bold and innovative working methods to enable it to draw the necessary political conclusions. That goal might be furthered by the holding of informal gatherings between the ministers in order to focus on a few issues, among them the modification of patterns of production and consumption, and international trade, which would be taken up at the next session of the Commission.

2. The concepts of sustainable development and growth were sometimes confused. Sustainable development was a sustainable way of life, not exponential growth until world resources ran out. It should also be socially just and based on solidarity between generations. In the developed world growth meant continuation of the present destructive patterns of production and consumption. Sustainable development meant that those patterns would change. The next session of the Commission should encourage the exchange of experience and make those changes possible. It should also examine how international cooperation

(Mrs. Pietikäinen, Finland)

could encourage Governments to take further action such as the development of the economic instruments. International cooperation was needed because most Governments hesitated to take any measures in isolation out of fear that increasing the use of the economic instruments would endanger their national competitiveness on international markets. For that reason trade and the environment should be regarded as mutually supportive and interdependent. Common guidelines were just beginning to be developed for joint action in that area. Negotiating viable solutions for environment and trade within GATT should be initiated immediately after the Uruguay Round had been successfully concluded. It was timely and important for the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider that issue and give impetus to the process at its next meeting. For its part, Finland would actively promote international cooperation on integrating trade and environment.

3. She was glad that, after a year of negotiation, the process of restructuring the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was in its final stage. It should be given adequate resources so that it could carry out its work of assisting the protection of the global environment and the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable economic development. Although the task had not been easy, the mandate provided by Agenda 21 was a correct one: ultimately every nation was responsible for its own natural resources and environment. A balance had to be struck between universal participation on one hand and effective decision-making and implementation on the other. It was of the utmost importance that the remaining open issues in the GEF negotiations should be resolved soon, as a positive outcome with respect to the GEF restructuring and replenishment would constitute a major achievement in international environmental cooperation and provide a solid financial base for the implementation of the conventions on climate change and the protection of biological diversity. At present, in view of the decreasing or stagnant aid flows at a time when needs were growing, all Governments were aware of the need to make the best use of the scarce resources available. For the industrialized countries, that required the careful definition of priorities as well as decisions on the most effective means for channelling resources; the choices were not markedly different even for the developing countries. The experience of GEF showed that it was possible to combine different and even conflicting perceptions into a functioning system. In that context, it must be borne in mind that many of the priority actions would not necessarily require additional funding: streamlined governance structures together with new working methods could already improve the machinery and make it more responsive to the needs of the countries to be served.

4. It was also necessary to strengthen the capacity of the operational activities system of the United Nations and give it the necessary efficiency to be able to compete for funds without giving up universal participation. It was to be hoped that that balance would be found and that the positive experience of the GEF negotiations would have a breakthrough effect on the process of reforming the Economic and Social Council.

5. She also expressed satisfaction that it had been agreed at the first High-level Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development to accelerate

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the process of sustainable management of forests and prepare the ground for consideration of that subject by the Commission in 1995. Implementation of the Forests Principles was a demanding task which required close cooperation by all. Finland had been honoured to host the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in June 1993, which had been an important step in promoting the Rio Forests Principles in Europe and developing practical criteria for sustainable forest management. It was to be hoped that effective preparations would be made for the discussion of the question, in close cooperation with relevant international organizations, particularly FAO, in the Commission in 1995. The follow-up to the Helsinki Conference would make an important contribution to those preparations. Finland continued to promote that process by arranging expert-level meetings.

6. She emphasized that the main responsibility for sustainable development remained at the national level. The Government of Finland had appointed a National Commission on Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, whose functions were to coordinate and give advice in the implementation of sustainable development, particularly in sectors of particular importance for the country's economic development, such as energy, traffic, agriculture, forestry and trade.

7. Mr. ONGERI (Kenya) said that, despite the economic situation the country was going through, Kenya had embarked on measures to implement some of the objectives of Agenda 21 with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other United Nations organs. Recently, his Government had established a National Environment Action Programme to evolve ways of integrating environmental considerations into the national development programmes in all stages for all sectors of the economy. With the assistance of UNEP, the Government had embarked on a review of its environmental laws with a view to harmonizing them. It had also introduced environmental education in all schools and universities. It had undertaken measures to strengthen its institutional capability in the field of environment, and had established the National Biodiversity Unit, which had submitted a report to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Convention on Biological Diversity.

8. After mentioning the many environmental conventions which Kenya had ratified or signed, he said that his Government welcomed the setting up of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as one of the financial mechanisms through which additional costs of projects aimed at environmental conservation and sustainable development could be funded. Kenya was of the view that there was a linkage between desertification and poverty; there was a need to utilize the resources of GEF to fund desertification-related programmes and projects for effective implementation of Agenda 21. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as the organ responsible for effective follow-up of the commitments and recommendations reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the General Assembly in its resolution 47/191, paragraph 32 (c), had decided that the Commission's secretariat would be

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located in New York, and that it would have a relevant office at Geneva and a liaison office at Nairobi. So far, the Nairobi office had not been established.

9. The Governing Council of UNEP at its seventeenth session had approved priority programmes targeted at integrating environment into development; that objective was an important element for achieving sustained growth and sustainable development of the developing countries. In that regard, it was to be hoped that sufficient financial and human resources would be assigned to UNEP to enable it to cope with its added responsibilities, bearing in mind that the strengthening of the regional offices of UNEP should not result in the weakening of its headquarters at Nairobi, a concern which had also been expressed in paragraph 38.23 of Agenda 21.

10. He was concerned that too many environment-related meetings were held outside UNEP headquarters at Nairobi. That trend kept the secretariat staff away from headquarters, at the expense of consultations and programme delivery. There was need, therefore, to rationalize the programming of meetings with a view to ensuring that as many of them as possible were held at headquarters, so as to minimize staff movements, to save on costs and to ensure maximum efficiency. He welcomed the recent affirmation by the Secretary-General, during his visit to Nairobi, that he would continue to strengthen the United Nations headquarters in Nairobi. As the host country, Kenya had continued to honour its obligations to the international community by giving maximum support to ensure that the secretariat and the Governing Council worked in a favourable environment.

11. His country had been honoured to host the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The session had provided an important forum for an initial exchange of information among Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions. Although the negotiations had not been concluded, Kenya hoped that the proposed convention and its protocol on Africa would be finalized by June 1994 and that the General Assembly would approve the extension of the deadline to December 1994 to allow for incorporation of other regional protocols. His delegation also hoped that an early consensus would emerge on the financial mechanism and flow of resources to fund activities identified under the Convention. Emphasizing the expertise of UNEP in desertification issues, he said he believed that the close linkage between desertification, drought and environment more than justified the involvement of UNEP in the negotiating process.

12. Regarding the sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources of the high seas, he said that his delegation felt that the fisheries resources faced the danger of depletion unless measures were taken for their conservation and exploitation. To that end, the developing countries required appropriate technology and resources to complement their own efforts in conserving and exploiting their marine resources for the benefit of their people and in the spirit of chapter 17 of Agenda 21.

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13. With regard to human settlements, he recalled that the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourteenth session had discussed and recommended several resolutions and actions for the improvement of human settlements and sustainable development, including the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, whose objective was to realize global affordable shelter for all groups in all types of settlements, including security of tenure, convenient access to employment and community services through the enabling approach. Kenya was committed to the implementation of the Global Strategy, and was already carrying out national programmes for that purpose. Measures that had been instituted included the revision of building by-laws and planning regulations in order to make shelter affordable to the majority of urban dwellers; support for local building material research and promotion of indigenous low-cost building materials; involvement of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and community-based organizations in the formulation of housing policies and programmes. Kenya was also developing a computerized database to be used in monitoring the performance of the shelter sector. The City Data Programme constituted a significant step in the establishment of the necessary national institutional and technical capacities required for the success of the Global Strategy. Kenya, as a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, was participating actively in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/180, which provided for convening in Istanbul, in 1996, the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), whose main objective was to formulate a global plan of action to address the issue of the worsening living conditions of a vast segment of the world population.

14. There existed a regrettable tendency to consider that human settlements problems were confined to the developing world. The fact was that homelessness and the need for decent shelter was a problem affecting developed and developing countries alike. The inner-city problems in the industrialized world, the slums in many developing countries and the scores of homeless people in the major cities of the world were examples of the type of human settlements and poverty problems that should be addressed. He therefore urged the international community to approach Habitat II with the unity of purpose that it deserved, in order to effectively address that global crisis. As a member of the Bureau, he wished to specifically acknowledge the efforts of the Habitat II secretariat to involve the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in the preparatory activities for the Conference. In that connection, African Member States were hopeful that the Habitat II secretariat would be able to organize a regional preparatory meeting before the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 stated that adequate resources would be allocated for the realization of the objectives of Habitat II and that the preparatory work already under way would continue during the 1994-1995 biennium. Such preparatory activities called for considerable funding and good will, without which the success of the Conference could be jeopardized.

15. With respect to the role and the place of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in the United Nations system, he said that it had been established in 1976 as a separate body from UNEP to deal specifically with the problem of human settlements. The need to address that problem was even

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greater than it had been in 1976, as evidenced by the adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, the inclusion of the question in chapter 7 of Agenda 21 and the convening of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Agenda 21 called for the strengthening of the role of the major groups involved in its implementation; in that regard, Kenya considered that Habitat was the relevant global focal point for implementing the programmes of Agenda 21 in the area of human settlements utilizing the expertise acquired over the years. The General Assembly in its resolution 47/212 B of 6 May 1993 had asked the Secretary-General to reconsider his decision to abolish the post of Executive Director of Habitat. Kenya was of the view that Habitat and UNEP had two distinct mandates which should not be merged in terms of management or programme delivery. Adding the work of Habitat to that of UNEP would create serious conflict in terms of personnel, time allocation and programme delivery, to the detriment of either centre's ability to fulfil its mandate.

16. Mr. NYAMBI (United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO)), speaking on agenda item 91 (f), said that UNSO had continued to provide assistance to countries through its support to strategic framework processes for the planning and implementation of activities related to the management of natural resources, operational field activities, dissemination of information and awareness building, and support to subregional organizations. In addition, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and in keeping with chapter 12 of Agenda 21, support to activities on environment information systems had been intensified, and a new impetus had been given to increased harmonization of efforts among donors in connection with national plans of action for combating desertification. Another area which had received attention was the problem of recurrent drought, which had caused serious damage in recent times. In that regard, it had been decided during 1993 to develop a programme on strengthening drought preparedness and mitigation for the Sudano-Sahelian countries. Countries were being assisted in developing policy frameworks for effective management of drought, strengthening institutional mechanisms and initiating capacity-building at national and local levels, and developing and testing flexible response options to protect livelihood systems at the local level.

17. In spite of renewed attention to the problem, the expectations generated at the Rio Conference and the interest of Governments in elaborating an international convention on desertification, resources allocated to combating desertification had continued to decrease over the last few years. On the one hand, work must be pursued on elaboration of the international convention and, on the other, it was important that funding should be made available for implementation of the six programme areas of chapter 12 of Agenda 21. To be an effective and operational instrument, the convention on desertification should foster greater national, regional and international commitment, actions and cooperation. To contribute to solving the problem of land degradation in the dry lands, the convention must place greater emphasis on protecting and improving the livelihoods of inhabitants in areas prone to drought and desertification. Such a livelihood-centred approach would provide one of the principal means of breaking the nexus between poverty and land degradation.

(Mr. Nyambi, UNSO)

18. In view of those concerns, UNSO and UNDP had continued to provide support to further the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, by providing information to and supporting the participation of the national focal points in the 22 Sudano-Sahelian countries, providing technical and substantive support to the African countries in connection with their participation in the process, and providing assistance to the secretariat of the Committee. In connection with that support, he wished to recall the relevant General Assembly resolutions inviting countries to contribute resources to enable UNSO to provide assistance to the most affected countries for the negotiating process. He also wished to express gratitude to Sweden, Norway and Denmark for their contributions through UNSO for that purpose.

19. The Governing Councils of UNEP and UNDP had reaffirmed the need to continue with the joint venture arrangement to support UNSO in connection with the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian Region, which had proved to be an effective mechanism for strengthening collaboration between the two organizations on actions to combat desertification. Consultations were now going on to see how the joint venture mechanism could be broadened to allow for participation of donors and other organizations. Because of the multisectoral nature of the fight against drought and desertification, UNSO was happy that the new Administrator of UNDP had assigned high priority to the question of desertification, and had initiated a process for the preparation of an overall strategy to ensure that the UNDP system would be able to respond more effectively to the challenges posed to sustainable human development by the problem of desertification.

20. Mr. OZOLINS (World Health Organization) said that in the time which had elapsed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Health Organization (WHO) had taken various steps to see that its programmes were responsive to the resolutions adopted at Rio and to Agenda 21. A new global strategy for health and environment had been formulated which established 12 organization-wide objectives and identified actions to achieve them through programmes for the promotion of environmental health and chemical safety and broader action and collaboration. WHO was preparing a detailed plan of action for the implementation of the strategy. Special emphasis would be placed on urban areas, where population and environmental problems were increasing, as well as on global health and environmental issues.

21. Because health and environment issues concerned everyone, there was a crucial need to obtain new partnerships and alliances with other socio-economic sectors in implementing the strategy. WHO, in cooperation with the UNDP Capacity 21 programme, had initiated work in some 10 countries in all WHO regions to support the work done by the Governments to ensure that health and environment considerations were incorporated into national plans for sustainable development. WHO was also developing guideline manuals for Governments on how to incorporate health protection and promotion measures into the development of policies and plans for the various sectors.

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22. As part of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) of WHO, ILO and UNEP, the objectives of which had been broadened in order to respond to the requests addressed by the Rio Conference, concrete steps had been taken in relation to decisions on environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals contained in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. It was expected that in 1994 the International Programme on Chemical Safety would have a stronger and wider base of support, inasmuch as organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) had expressed their intention of joining IPCS as cooperating organizations. Preparations were also well under way for convening an Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Risk Assessment and Management, which was scheduled for April 1994 in Stockholm. Governments would be invited to examine proposed terms of reference and operating procedures for an intergovernmental mechanism on chemical risk assessment and management, as well as to give policy guidance on achieving specific objectives called for in the implementation of the six programme areas outlined in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. While WHO would make every effort to accommodate needed programme changes in connection with health issues in line with Agenda 21 within the existing resources, it was clear that without new partnerships and resources, it would be very difficult to accomplish that task.

23. Mr. NEBIE (Burkina Faso) praised the work carried out by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, at which it had adopted a number of resolutions dealing with activities to follow up UNCED, pursuant to which the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa and the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had been established and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been convened. Furthermore, substantial progress had been made within the Secretariat, and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was continuing. Nevertheless, the discussions under way at the current session prompted concern, as did the outcome of certain meetings.

24. With regard to the international convention to combat desertification, he reaffirmed the necessity of adopting a practical, action-oriented instrument, and earnestly hoped that the convention and the annex concerning Africa could be finalized by June 1994. As to the financing of projects to be implemented under programmes established pursuant to the convention, given its new structure, GEF would be one of the financial institutions most ideally suited to provide funds, and he endorsed the idea of allocating GEF resources for that purpose. With regard to the Commission on Sustainable Development, all delegations had recognized that few of the pledges made at UNCED had been translated into contributions. Agenda 21 could be successfully implemented in the developing countries only if sufficient additional resources were available, human resource development was promoted and transfers of technology and know-how proceeded on favourable terms.

25. Ms. TOMKINSON (Australia) said that the success of the Commission on Sustainable Development was of the utmost importance. It was necessary to ensure that the United Nations system implemented Agenda 21 in a coordinated, outcome-oriented and cost-effective manner and to encourage Governments and intergovernmental organizations to implement the programmes adopted following the Rio Conference. Her country attached high priority to the Commission's review of national action on Agenda 21. Accordingly, national reporting should be encouraged, in order to obtain information on successful models for national progress and identify obstacles to progress. Her country was preparing its first national report to the Commission. That was a difficult task, which required consideration of a complex set of environmental, economic and social issues in an integrated manner and in accordance with a challenging set of guidelines. That complexity might prove discouraging, and priority therefore should be given to considering ways to simplify the guidelines for the voluntary preparation of reports.

26. Her delegation looked forward to the outcome of the work of the three panels of the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and commended the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development relating to the follow-up to Agenda 21. With regard to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, her delegation supported the proposal for a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee to address outstanding issues, in view of the importance of the Conference for the entire international community.

27. Her country was participating actively in the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a convention to combat desertification and believed that the convention should address the underlying causes of the phenomenon, including human behaviour and environmental and socio-economic factors such as the adverse impacts of trade distortions. At the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, her delegation had joined in the adoption by consensus of a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Committee until January 1995, on the clear understanding that it in no way prejudged the content of the convention itself, which would be determined during the sessions of the Committee. It also welcomed the report on the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and urged all agencies involved in its implementation to ensure that future work was consistent with the convention on the subject.

28. With regard to unregulated high seas fishing and irresponsible fishing practices on the high seas, which posed serious problems for countries whose economies depended on living marine resources, particularly the countries in the Pacific region, her delegation strongly supported the work of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. It also endorsed the recommendation of the Conference calling on the General Assembly to convene two further sessions of the Conference in March and August 1994. Furthermore, her country remained firmly opposed to large-scale drift-net fishing on the high seas, believed that it should be replaced with selective and responsible fishing methods and remained concerned at the fact that, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/215 notwithstanding, the practice was continuing in some areas, particularly in the Mediterranean. The General

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Assembly should request the Secretary-General to submit a further report to it at its next session on the implementation of resolution 46/215 and seek detailed information from relevant nations on the effectiveness of measures they had employed to that end.

29. Her country was pleased that the forty-seventh session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had reiterated the role of UNEP as the primary environment agency of the United Nations and that progress had been made in determining priorities in the light of Agenda 21. It was essential that UNEP develop a coherent mandate for its regional offices and cooperate with other international and regional bodies to avoid duplication of work.

30. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia), speaking also on behalf of the other States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, namely, Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania and Morocco, emphasized the critical importance which those countries attached to questions relating to the environment and development and to international cooperation in that field, since they were affected by many environmental problems, including desertification and the pollution of their northern coasts by industrial wastes originating in industrialized countries. Accordingly, they had adopted concerted national and regional policies to protect their environment. The measures they had adopted included the following: the elaboration of a strategy to combat desertification and the establishment of an African data monitoring and exchange network on desertification and soil erosion; assessments of the state of the environment; a drinking water supply plan; the proclamation of June 17 as Maghreb Environment Day and the adoption of the Maghreb Environment Charter.

31. Inasmuch as desertification and drought were global problems, as were global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer, the international convention to combat desertification should generate as much interest as other environmental instruments. Accordingly, the industrialized countries should review the position they had adopted at the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, particularly with regard to financial resources. An increase in resources for the convention would prevent it from encountering the same difficulties that had affected the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification adopted at Nairobi in 1977. The countries of the Arab Maghreb Union also reaffirmed their support for strict compliance with the mandate entrusted to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in General Assembly resolution 47/188. It therefore was essential to proceed in accordance with chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and negotiate a regional legal instrument that would be annexed to the convention and form an integral part thereof.

32. With respect to climate change, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union felt that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a general convention on climate change should limit itself to organizing the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and refrain from taking decisions on its behalf. They also felt that the principle of the joint but different responsibility of States should be

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fully respected and that the developed countries had a special responsibility in combating the adverse effects of climate change. The fact that there was no methodology for preparing a list of all the gases causing the greenhouse effect should not prevent the industrialized countries from submitting an exhaustive list of those gases at the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. That was why it was necessary to adopt specific methodologies for the developing countries which would take their level of economic development fully into account. The concerted implementation of the obligations assumed by the Parties to the Convention should be governed chiefly by the provisions of article 4, paragraphs 2 (a) and (d), which for the present limited it to the industrialized countries.

33. With regard to fishing and marine contamination, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union were convinced that the progress achieved in the Mediterranean in the framework of the Barcelona Convention was a useful basis for cooperation and would try to make it permanent in order to guarantee the ecological balance of that semi-enclosed sea. They also recognized the commitments with regard to the Mediterranean assumed in Nicosia and confirmed in Cairo.

34. The States of the Arab Maghreb Union supported the measures provided for in the Convention on Biological Diversity and considered that the preparation of a plan for safeguarding biological diversity would make it possible for that region to preserve its riches and continue to play its historic role as a bridge between North and South. The programme should include the participation of the centres for specialized activities of the Plan of Action for the Mediterranean and have the support of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

35. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union proposed the following: a broad regional attack on those questions based on the strengthening of the regional and subregional fishing organizations; the provision of assistance to the developing countries to strengthen their capacity to supervise, manage and conserve fish resources and stocks and support of the final document of that Conference, which should take into account all those factors and the peculiarities of each region. In that context, the continuation of large-scale drift-net fishing, a practice which should be prohibited pursuant to the resolutions on the subject adopted by the General Assembly, was cause for concern.

36. With respect to mine clearing in zones of armed conflict, he drew attention to the urgent need to resolve that problem, which was hindering the development of the regions in which minefields existed.

37. Because of their geographical location, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union were exposed to invasion by the desert locust. In that connection, he recalled the decisions taken by the Ministers of Agriculture of the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union and the Sahel in the meeting held at Algiers on 27 September 1993, in which they had appealed to the international community to implement the emergency plan worked out by the experts of the region (A/C.2/48/6). He also recalled the draft resolution on the subject submitted by

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the Group of African States and expressed the hope of the Arab Maghreb Union that help would be forthcoming from the international community at the pledging conference to be held under FAO auspices in the first quarter of 1994.

38. It was necessary to provide the developing countries with additional financial resources through the transfer of economically sound technologies and the strengthening of their national capacities. A first step in that direction would be the establishment at the regional level of international eco-technological centres which would assist in the provision, transfer and use in those countries of the needed technologies and related capacities.

39. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that her country, which was situated at the centre of the Sahel, was suffering the adverse effects of environmental degradation, as a result of which 87 per cent of the population had been deprived of its chief means of production because of soil erosion. Consequently, environmental questions were of central importance to the process of Niger's development. After listing the various international instruments relating to the environment to which Niger was a party, she expressed satisfaction that an international convention to combat desertification in the countries experiencing serious drought or desertification was being elaborated, a process in which Niger was participating actively.

40. Her delegation wished to express its gratitude to UNSO for the intensity with which, in accordance with the recommendations of UNCED and on the basis of its broad experience, it was carrying out its work of helping the countries of the Sudano-Sahel region in their strategies for combating desertification, focusing its projects and programmes on the integrated management of natural resources, the development of pastoral activities, land use and education and awareness-building. Unfortunately, since 1992 the donor countries had reduced their contributions, which diminished the effectiveness of its work. It was therefore to be hoped that those countries would change their attitude and provide the Office with resources adequate to enable it to implement the recommendation made at the Rio Conference that its financial and human resources should be increased and its mandate broadened. To that end, she expressed the hope that the consultations begun by the office with a view to making use of new financing machinery like the World Environment Fund (WEF) would be successful.

41. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that the report of the UNEP Governing Council at its seventeenth session demonstrated the magnitude of its task with regard to the follow-up action to UNCED. The contributions of UNEP would be essential in the implementation of Agenda 21, the two conventions on climate change and biodiversity and in the elaboration and implementation of international conventions and agreements on desertification, sustainable development of small island developing States and the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by UNEP in promoting international cooperation in the area of environment and in assisting developing countries to build their capacity to handle environmental concerns. It was to be hoped that the Executive Director of UNEP would be able to devote her entire attention to the tasks before UNEP.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

42. With regard to human settlements, which were among the first priorities in the development agenda of developing and developed countries, he said that adequate housing was a stabilizing factor for society and encouraged the sense of community which was vital in the pursuit of development. Housing was the basic foundation on which development goals in many sectors could be structured and could serve to integrate programmes directed towards the solution of the problems of poverty, unemployment, urban migration, social crimes and environmental degradation. Realizing the vital importance of housing in addressing those development issues and in building a socially stable and secure society, the Government of Sri Lanka had given priority to human settlements in its development programmes and would continue to do so until it reached the goal of shelter for all.

43. Human settlements had profound implications for the broader questions of development, peace and security, and it was important to address human settlement issues at the international, regional and national levels. Those issues had for too long received less international attention than they deserved, in spite of the fact that the overall outlook for shelter world wide was bleak: widespread civil conflicts and wars and natural disasters had completely destroyed many cities and villages in various parts of the world and had left a large number of refugees and displaced persons homeless.

44. The Commission on Human Settlements and its secretariat, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) had been established under General Assembly resolution 32/162 to serve as a focal point for human settlements action and the coordination of activities within the United Nations system. In its resolution 14/19, the Commission emphasized and confirmed that the Centre had an important role to play in the execution of important actions within the United Nations system. The Centre should contribute to the preparations of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996, the implementation of the relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the mobilization of international support for ensuring shelter for all, and the coordination of strategies and development projects. There was much more to be achieved in the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and, although the main responsibility in that area resided with Member States, the Centre had a crucial role to play in supporting national Governments in their efforts to become effective facilitators in the field of housing. The Centre helped Member States to prepare national shelter strategies and build national capabilities to implement such strategies through institution-building, the dissemination of information and the establishment of databases to monitor progress in shelter programmes and training of personnel. In addition, the Centre provided special advisory services and carried out regional activities for evaluating and developing new approaches for the provision of shelter. Technical assistance was provided by the Centre for research to identify realistic solutions in such areas as housing finance, building materials and technology, land reclamation and urban development. All of those activities were of immense value to developing countries, and the role of Habitat in that respect was equivalent to the role of UNEP in the field of environment.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

45. At its fourteenth session, the Commission on Human Settlements had expressed the view that its institutional capabilities should be substantially strengthened. To that end, it had recommended that UNEP and Habitat should "be kept under distinct senior management in accordance with the specific nature and activities of the two bodies". That recommendation had been supported by the Chairman of the Group of 77 in his statement on behalf of the Group, which Sri Lanka fully endorsed. Any savings resulting from the abolition of the post of Executive Director of Habitat would not compensate for the obvious set-back that such a move would entail in terms of shelter programme implementation and the preparatory work for Habitat II. Inter-agency coordination was undoubtedly needed but not at the expense of effective implementation of plans and projects. Coordination was necessary not only between UNEP and Habitat but should also include UNDP, since the three agencies carried out joint projects. The challenge facing the international community in the area of human settlements necessitated and justified the immediate appointment of an Executive Director of Habitat. The early appointment of an Executive Director would be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/162 and would enable Habitat to respond to the needs of developing countries in their efforts to implement the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and contribute to preparations for Habitat II. His delegation therefore urged the Secretary-General to fill the post of Executive Director of Habitat as soon as possible in order to ensure that the Centre remained under senior management.

46. Mr. CENCEN (Slovenia) said that the transition to a parliamentary democracy and market economy made it necessary for new democracies to carry out a thorough reform of their legislation on environmental protection. That would be in keeping with the double objective of coordinating their new environmental legislation with that of countries with high standards in that area, and encouraging the environmentally sound restructuring of technologically outmoded and crisis-ridden economies. However, both global development and the development of individual countries no longer depended on economic efficiency alone but must also uphold the principle of sustainable development, the need for which was becoming increasingly evident. One of the implications of that approach was that the transfer of pollutant technologies from developed countries to less developed parts of the world should be halted since, far from resolving the problem of environmental pollution in general, that practice only dispatched the problem from one place to another. Development aid should therefore introduce technologies that would not damage the environment of recipient countries.

47. The competitiveness of the Slovenian economy would be protected by the ban on the import of polluting technologies, taking into account the fact that environmental problems could not be resolved through trade restrictions but rather through appropriate macroeconomic and environmental policies. Slovenia wanted its environmental legislation to be in keeping with the documents of the Rio Conference, in particular Agenda 21. During the current year, Slovenia had adopted the Environmental Protection Act and the Public Trading Services Act, which had established a system for exploiting natural goods and resources under environmentally sensitive conditions and respecting the "polluter pays" principle. In addition, Slovenia was seeking to cooperate with non-governmental

(Mr. Cencen, Slovenia)

organizations and the public with a view to implementing the decisions of the Rio Conference.

48. The problem of environmental degradation and destruction was a problem that affected all mankind. It could not be solved through legislative reforms and national technological innovations but required, first of all, major structural changes in international law, economy and ethics. Modern legislation should be based on the principle of cooperation and responsibility, but not even that was enough. The environment could not be protected merely by prohibitions and compulsory measures but required a social consensus on environmental protection reached by the mechanisms of stimulation and motivation within the economic and social system. Furthermore, an efficient system of environmental protection was impossible without high-quality data on the state of the environment. Research, data collection and environmental protection programming and planning were essential. It was also important to strike a balance between the State system of monitoring and controlling natural phenomena and similar activities carried out by local communities. That would be particularly difficult for some countries that were major polluters because of their critical economic situation and environmental conditions inherited from the past.

49. Of course, privatization could be an important step towards sound environmental management, provided that it took place within an appropriately developed normative framework, and that, as had already been mentioned, it was accompanied by both prohibitions and incentives. Although Slovenia was already headed in that direction, it still needed international financial assistance in the environmental field for the following reasons: the national capital market could not provide sufficient resources for investment in business or environmental restructuring; it was easy to steer the process of restructuring the economy in an environmentally sound direction by applying financial criteria and incentives, whereas waiting for the economy to reactivate itself could create greater environmental problems; in addition to financing, appropriate technological know-how and management practices must be transferred to recipient organizations, as innovative financing was the most rapid means of introducing innovative policies and practices.

50. While each country had its specific natural, economic and social conditions and each should therefore establish its own objective for environmentally sound development, it was clear that the United Nations, through the relevant institutions, was the most appropriate forum for putting forward suggestions and proposing solutions of general interest and also for the exchange of experiences. Determined efforts must therefore be made in order to ensure an appropriate division of labour within the United Nations system. The document resulting from such efforts could be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development for its consideration and subsequently to the Economic and Social Council for approval.

51. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that it had been Israel's view for many years that the gap in standards of living and capacities between rich and poor countries was an even greater threat to universal peace than that created by the admitted neglect of the environment. In that context, Agenda 21 opened new

(Mr. Eliashiv, Israel)

vistas for attaining sustainable development and it was vital to build on the momentum of cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development in order to create a sense of partnership for the future. That depended largely on the Commission on Sustainable Development as the primary forum for international cooperation and action. Indeed, the first session of the Commission had emphasized the political importance of effective follow-up to the Rio Conference and reaffirmed national responsibilities concerning sustainable development and the commitment to implementing Agenda 21.

52. Israel was particularly sensitive to the fragility of the environment and development because its rebirth had been the result of a constant effort to rehabilitate degraded land. While nearly every problem had a technological or scientific solution, provided that there was a will to solve it and the necessary financial means were available, those solutions were viable only if they were designed and implemented on a global scale. While everyone could learn from the mistakes and emulate the successes of others, nothing was more urgent than the establishment of a programme for the compilation and dissemination of information on the environment and for environmental monitoring under international auspices. While general policies must be dealt with on a global level, special importance should be attributed to regional cooperation in solving problems of common interest. The Mediterranean Action Plan, in which Israel actively participated and most of whose achievements would not have been possible on a purely national basis, could serve as a good example. Israel therefore welcomed the fact that, at its first session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had emphasized the importance of the transfer and environmentally sound application of technology with a view to enhancing the scientific and technological capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable development. Technology was a key element in sustainable development and should be carefully selected so that it could be adapted to the specific needs of each developing country.

53. The research conducted in Israel was adapted to the specific requirements of the region and was linked to Israel's very considerable expertise in the use of water resources, the desalination of sea water and the purification of brackish water in the desert. All that research and development activity, which represented the highest degree of water control in the world, was aimed at turning arid deserts into fertile land. Desertification adversely affected the lives and well-being of 2.7 billion people. Those who were concerned about environmental issues must therefore redouble their efforts to bring it under control. The Middle East possessed vast desert lands but meagre water resources. However, the desert could be turned into fertile land if the necessary experience and technology were available. The National Desert Research Institute at Ben Gurion University in Israel was engaged in arid zone research and development, and, in particular, the conversion of the desert into a productive environment. The scope of the Institute's activities transcended Israel's borders and its research had world-wide significance. Israel therefore invited all countries, particularly its neighbours in the Middle East, to join it in its research and development venture and share its experience in order to find practical solutions to desertification.

(Mr. Eliashiv, Israel)

54. Adequate funding mechanisms were also essential for environmental protection. It was to be hoped that the World Bank, the regional development banks and other international institutions, which had achieved laudable success in promoting the development of agriculture, industry, education, health and social welfare in many developing countries, could contribute to fostering environmentally sound development. The capacity of the Global Environment Facility to finance environmental programmes of concern to all nations must be strengthened. No less important was the role of UNDP, UNEP and other organizations of the United Nations within the framework of the follow-up to the Rio Conference and the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small-Island Developing States, an international convention to combat desertification and other follow-up activities of the Rio Conference.

55. While nations built an environmental management infrastructure, international organizations should play a transitional role in the developing world. Non-governmental environmental organizations also deserved the support of the international community. The Commission on Sustainable Development, for its part, should provide an appropriate intergovernmental forum for the exchange of information on national and multilateral experiences. An effort must therefore be made to ensure that it was an efficient and effective body, that it promoted genuine international cooperation and that it represented the interests of all nations.

56. Regional cooperation was an essential element for the implementation of environmental action. In that conviction, during the recent multilateral talks held in the framework of the Middle East peace process, Israel had presented detailed and concrete proposals on projects for arid zone agricultural development, the establishment of a centre for combating desertification, the development of alternative energy sources, desalination technology and environmental protection. At the recent plenary meeting of the Working Group on the Environment, held in Cairo, an Israeli proposal to declare 1994 the Year of the Environment in the Middle East had been adopted. Those projects were intended not only to foster cooperation but also to build confidence and achieve peace. It was Israel's desire that that peace should embrace all neighbouring countries so that they could live together in an atmosphere of equality, trust and mutual respect and devote their concerted efforts, resources and energies to social and economic development through genuine cooperation.

57. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that, in most cases, the underlying causes of desertification were poverty and the lack of human, technological, institutional and financial resources. Population pressures and the consequent mismanagement of natural resources were causing the degradation of the fragile ecosystems of arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas and setting in motion a process of desertification that, in many cases, was irreversible, and that was not merely an environmental problem but primarily one of development. For that reason, any measure designed to combat desertification should focus on its fundamental causes: poverty and underdevelopment. Action by FAO to combat desertification should be accompanied by measures to promote integrated rural development, in conjunction with the

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

elimination of other causes and manifestations of poverty and underdevelopment. Such action should not be divorced from other measures necessary for the attainment of sustainable development, including those adopted at the global level to adjust the terms of trade between agriculture and other sectors, rural and urban zones and, in particular, North and South.

58. Over a number of decades FAO had provided advisory services and technical assistance designed to enhance agriculture and rural development in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas affected by desertification and drought. In the light of experience gathered in the field and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), FAO had recently embarked upon a process of reassessing its policies and restructuring its programmes, and its policy-making bodies had defined the principles and guidelines of a framework international cooperation programme for agriculture and sustainable rural development tailored to the priority needs of arid, semi-arid and sub-humid regions affected by desertification and drought. The three basic strategic elements of the programme for the development of those zones were: greater efficiency in the utilization of the limited resources at their disposal; a reduction of the risk of, and vulnerability to, unpredictable climatic events and other natural disasters and the conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment. The programme components envisaged four levels of action: (i) a re-evaluation of agricultural and rural development plans and policies, bearing in mind the needs of the population and the production capacity of natural resources in the context of structural adjustment; (ii) the preparation of subsectoral plans and programmes in three basic subsectors: food security, forestry and fisheries; (iii) popular participation and the development of human resources in the context of rural development; and (iv) the transformation of production systems, making them economically, environmentally and socially sustainable so as to diversify products and sources of revenue. Activities by FAO in those four areas were supported by 12 special programmes of action which included special projects relating to the provision of services and technical support for the utilization of natural resources and the rational use of fertilizers, the fight against infestations and the supply of energy in rural areas.

59. FAO was also participating very actively in the negotiating process for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. Through its programmes and specialized technical and legal services and in cooperation with the other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, FAO was assisting in the search for an international consensus which would help mobilize the necessary resources to control drought and desertification. In that context, through its active participation in the meetings of the Negotiating Committee and the inter-agency meetings, FAO was placing its technical skills in the area of combating desertification and developing arid zones at the disposal of member countries and the secretariat of the International Negotiating Committee. He noted that three basic documents had been prepared for the Negotiating Committee, and that other technical and strategic documents, as well as a catalogue of FAO activities in the area of desertification, had been drawn up in response to the immediate needs relating

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

to the preparation of the convention. FAO was providing support services through an interdepartmental working group on desertification and was collaborating with the secretariat of the Committee, at whose disposal it had placed the services of a legal specialist; it was also assisting with the process of reviewing and preparing comments on the documentation submitted to the Committee.

60. He recalled that the agricultural sector, one of the main driving forces of the economy of small island developing States, contributed to food security and to increased foreign currency inflows and was therefore of fundamental importance in attaining sustainable development, eradicating poverty and satisfying basic human needs. It was vital that the draft programme of action of the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States should give due importance to sustainable agricultural and rural development, particularly its economic, social and environmental aspects, as well as to issues related to appropriate technology, institution-building and popular participation, all of which were indispensable components of the balanced and sustainable development of small island developing States. FAO had made extensive contributions to the Conference secretariat and had attended two regional technical meetings held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in June and in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in July 1993, as well as the Preparatory Committee in New York. For the aforementioned reasons, FAO would continue to support the secretariat of the Conference and the Governments of small island developing States in preparing specific proposals for action which took into account the fundamental role played by agriculture, forestry and fisheries in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development and in mobilizing the international donor community in support of sustainable agriculture and rural development.

61. Straddling and highly migratory fish stocks were distributed at different stages of their life cycle both in the exclusive economic zones of riparian States and in the high seas. If those species, which were of great commercial importance, were to be effectively conserved and managed, consistent measures must be adopted in their distribution zones, so as to ensure the rational harvesting and the harmonization of catch methods for each population. That required the coordination of activities at the international level and the responsible management of fisheries. In those cases where there was no technical information on a specific fish stock, there was a considerable degree of international agreement on the necessity for the implementation of a cautious exploitation model until further data was available on the impact which the fishing of that species had on the resource base. While the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea contained provisions on the exploitation of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, as well as on the cooperation of States in the conservation and management of living resources in the high seas, no detailed information was given on the scope of such cooperation, which had rendered necessary an international agreement on measures which should be adopted in that regard. The need to achieve more effective conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks had been accepted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. To that end, the

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been convened. The conclusion of an international agreement on mechanisms for international cooperation, duties of the flag State, responsibility for compliance with the provisions by the port State and compatibility and coherence between national and international conservation measures for the same stock would constitute a major step forward and would make it possible to continue work on technical aspects of the elaboration of measures and policies designed to ensure sustainable use of resources.

62. FAO was drafting an international code of conduct for responsible fishing that would cover general principles and six thematic areas: fishing operations, research, management, aquaculture, trade and integrated management of coastal zones. One element of that code would be an agreement to promote the observance of measures to conserve and manage the resources of the high seas which the FAO General Conference would adopt by virtue of article XIV of its Basic Texts. The code would also give greater impetus to other initiatives to promote the rational and sustainable use of fisheries resources. The advances made so far at the two initial meetings of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks were very encouraging. FAO would continue to contribute scientific and technical support during and after the Conference. Moreover, it would ensure that other initiatives took into consideration the discussions held during the Conference in order to guarantee that the code would be both comprehensive and compatible with the results of the Conference.

63. Mr. MANCZYK (Poland) said that his delegation shared the opinion that promoting the concept of sustainable development was one of the central challenges of current times. UNCED and the institutional arrangements resulting from it had provided the international community with a framework for a more stable, predictable and sustainable process of development. The task that remained was to ensure that action followed the agreements and recommendations reached at Rio de Janeiro. The participation at the ministerial level in the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had testified to the strong political commitment and readiness of many Governments to give sustainable development a primary role in their development programmes. It would be appropriate, however, to secure the participation of Ministers responsible for portfolios other than the environment. The proposal made by the Nordic countries to devote the 1994 high-level segment to the discussion of the interrelationship between environment and economy deserved further consideration. Another important stimulus for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other processes recommended by the Rio Conference had come from the Tokyo summit meeting of the seven major industrialized countries in June 1993. The agreement on a multi-year programme of work for the Commission was important, because it provided the possibility to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and to ensure an integrated approach to all of its environment and development components. The Commission should give greater attention in its programme of work to the question of lifestyles and consumption and production patterns that could not be sustained.

(Mr. Manczyk, Poland)

64. The strengthening of coordination among the relevant United Nations agencies was of the utmost importance in the process of implementing the decisions taken at UNCED. The interaction between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Commission were noteworthy as a positive example of how such a complex issue as trade and environment could be dealt with in an effective and mutually supportive way. Poland noted with satisfaction that the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development had initiated a process for the allocation of responsibilities among the organizations of the United Nations system, and shared the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the system must achieve more effective coordination at the country and regional levels. It considered the decision of the Bureau of the Commission to hold back-to-back meetings of the two groups of experts timely and appropriate and that the arrangements for their first sessions should provide enough time for Governments and experts to arrive at those meetings well prepared. It noted with concern the slow progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and believed that the lack of adequate financing was among the principal constraints. Thus, special attention must be given to the activities of the ad hoc working group on finance.

65. Mr. SAREER (Maldives) said that his country, a small island State threatened by the effects of environmental degradation, had high hopes for the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, especially chapter 17 of the latter. It also attached the highest priority to the success of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small-Island Developing States. Maldives numbered among them, and like the others, it faced constraints in limited manpower, especially skilled workers, the large distances separating population centres, the high cost of infrastructure, current demographic trends and scarce availability of information on basic resources. In addition, there were external constraints such as world trade and price fluctuations, regional political instability, global climate change and sea-level rise. The last two phenomena were a cause of special concern to Maldives, a country situated on a low-lying coral atoll. Assessments of their potential impact required careful evaluation of many factors, such as the current resource base, the state of the environment, the population growth rate and development activities within the country, before considering policy and planning alternatives. Small island States such as Maldives did not possess the necessary resources.

66. The financing of Agenda 21 still remained an issue of major concern. As the President of Maldives had said at the Rio Summit, although the estimated cost of over $600 million per year for the implementation of Agenda 21 could appear enormous, the cost to Maldives for construction of sea defences for only 50 of the 200 inhabited islands would reach an estimated $1.5 billion. He had added that, if the international community could spend an estimated $1 trillion annually on global defence, surely it must be possible to mobilize resources for more constructive purposes. In the case of small island developing States, national strategies must be combined with international action to promote sustained and environmentally sound development in those countries.

(Mr. Sareer, Maldives)

67. His delegation welcomed the efforts made in observance of General Assembly resolution 47/189, in particular the work of the Preparatory Committee, which had been reflected in a draft programme of action. In view of the lack of time, however, a few major areas remained unaddressed. It joined other delegations which had requested the resumption of the first session of the Preparatory Committee to enable the Conference participants to be well prepared. His delegation considered that if the Conference adopted a programme of action, a corresponding follow-up mechanism must be established stipulating a periodic review of its implementation, in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Conference were realized. In the implementation stage, a major difficulty faced by small island States was the lack of an appropriate international institution to coordinate and mobilize effectively support for their needs. Therefore, it was essential to establish a secretariat within the United Nations for that purpose.

68. Mr. TOMASSON (Iceland), speaking on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, said that the success of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development would depend not only on the Commission itself but also on each country's active implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). In the view of the Nordic countries, the objectives of the Conference obviously could not be attained unless all Governments adopted effective measures to resolve their respective environment and development problems. In that context, he stressed the central role of women in promoting sustainable development.

69. Financing the implementation of Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change was a difficult task that called for a new and more effective approach to financing at the global, multilateral and bilateral level. It would be necessary to find innovative means of financing, such as recourse to non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The restructuring of the Global Environment Facility was an important step in that direction. More effective financing might also be obtained through increased cooperation between the private sectors of the industrialized and developing countries. In any case, the topic of innovative financing should receive particular attention, and advice should be sought from the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development.

70. Because of the growing importance of developing and transferring environmentally sound technologies, legal measures and economic instruments in donor and recipient countries would have to be coordinated so as to encourage increased private-sector participation in the transfer of technology. There was an urgent need to improve the link between technology transfer and capacity-building in order to ensure more efficient operation and maintenance of environmentally sound technologies once they were transferred to developing countries and countries in transition. It was also important to promote increased South-South cooperation to improve the adaptation of imported technologies to the circumstances peculiar to each case and enhance the use and development of indigenous, local and traditional knowledge and techniques, which in many instances had proved more cost-effective and environmentally friendly. The Nordic countries hoped that all those problems would be seriously addressed

(Mr. Tomasson, Iceland)

in the upcoming meetings of various bodies in connection with the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

71. The relationship between trade, environment and development was another issue of global importance. Work in that area should be guided by the fundamental objectives of sustainable development, and one way to attain them was to make sure that trade and environmental policies were mutually supportive. To that end, the compatibility of trade and the environment should be made a priority area within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in the neat future, for which purpose the Uruguay Round must be brought to a successful conclusion. Special attention should also be paid to the needs of developing countries and countries in transition. The work in that area initiated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should support the efforts within GATT and complement the work of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

72. In the view of the Nordic countries, fruitful international collaboration on the environment required solid regional and institutional support. Regional cooperation was essential for the development of effective action programmes in such areas as coastal-zone management, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and fresh water resources, combating desertification, and developing and disseminating indigenous knowledge and techniques. Furthermore, such cooperation ensured the active participation of Governments and local populations. With respect to institutional support, the Nordic countries welcomed the stronger involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the catalyst and coordinator for environmental issues. When financial resources were scarce, it was imperative to ensure that they were used for result-oriented projects and to minimize administrative costs. To that end, the United Nations system should avoid duplicating efforts and should take advantage of the experience and comparative advantages of the relevant agencies. That was why the Nordic countries, which welcomed the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, would like to see all of the Member States maintain a consistent position in the various United Nations governing bodies when promoting the integration of environment and development goals.

73. The Nordic countries were encouraged by the progress achieved to date in implementing the results of UNCED, such as the positive decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, aimed at, inter alia, increasing regional cooperation on the establishment of conservation and management measures. In that connection, in May the UNEP Governing Council had accepted the generous offer of the United States to host an intergovernmental conference on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities, to be held in the fall of 1995. The topic was of great importance, since most pollution of the marine environment was caused by land-based activities. To contribute to the rapid adoption of international measures to resolve that problem, his Government had offered to host, in the spring of 1995, the final preparatory meeting for that conference, in which the Nordic countries would play an active role.

(Mr. Tomasson, Iceland)

74. The Nordic countries were encouraged to see that implementation of the forest principles was well under way at the national and regional levels. Those principles represented an important step towards creating a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The negotiations on a convention to combat desertification had got off to a good start, although the complexity of the issue meant that further practical consideration would have to be given to the nature of the instrument. However, the Nordic countries were confident that the convention could be completed by June 1994. They were in the process of preparing for the first conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. That process necessarily included coordinating with the Global Environment Facility so that it could serve as the financial mechanism for the two conventions.

75. The outcome of the Rio Conference recognized that proper management of human settlements was a prerequisite to attaining the overall goals of human-centred development. The Nordic countries were pleased to note that preparations were well under way for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

76. Lastly, the Nordic countries wished to reiterate a concern which they had expressed on several occasions but which had not received sufficient attention: the possible detrimental effect of military activities on the environment. In recent years, they had received alarming reports from Eastern Europe and other regions about serious environmental degradation caused by military activities. Obviously, military activities should strictly respect the environmental standards prevailing in civilian society, which was why the Nordic countries welcomed the ongoing efforts to integrate environmental concerns into those activities. They also stressed the importance of undertaking a general study of that issue against the background of the recent decision taken by the UNEP Governing Council on the basis of the Agenda 21 chapter on hazardous waste.

77. Mr. DIALLO (Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification) said that the English-language draft of the negotiating text of the International Convention to Combat Desertification had already been circulated to delegations for transmission to their competent national authorities with a view to the Negotiating Committee's third session, which would be held in New York from 17 to 28 January 1994. He emphasized the need for Member States to contribute to the Special Voluntary Fund established to assist developing countries affected by desertification and drought, in particular the least developed countries, to participate fully and effectively in the negotiation process, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/188.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

*Official Records*

SECOND COMMITTEE
38th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 23 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

# SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

later: Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico)
(Vice-Chairman)

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(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/191 ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued)

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (continued)

(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(c) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/48/25, A/48/451 and Corr.1, A/48/272-S/26108, A/48/552; A/C.2/48/2, A/C.2/48/6)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/48/216-E/1993/92, A/48/552; A/C.2/48/6)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/48/8 and Add.1, A/48/37)

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/182, A/48/291-S/26242, A/48/294-S/26247, A/48/309, A/48/338, A/48/359, A/48/401, A/48/427, A/48/484-S/26552, A/48/485, A/48/552, A/48/563; A/C.2/48/4, A/C.2/48/6)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/191 ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW UP THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/442)

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (continued) (A/48/36, A/48/564)

(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/48/479)

1. Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia) expressed concern over the general response to the recommendations made and commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development regarding the implementation of Agenda 21. At its first session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had gone beyond organizational issues, adopting seven important decisions and establishing ad hoc working groups on finance and technology, the financial implications of which would shortly be discussed in the Fifth Committee. The Economic and Social Council had endorsed the report of the session, and financial support was now needed to implement the Commission's decisions. The difficult decision to establish the two working groups had been prompted by the failure by States to meet commitments relating to additional finance and concessional transfers of technology. He appealed to Member States to support the working groups and to refrain from impeding the work of the Commission.

2. Member States must demonstrate political will to effect the broad social and economic changes that were needed to reverse adverse trends affecting the environment and development. The concept of development in both the developed

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

and developing countries had been permanently changed in the wake of the Rio Conference. As increasing importance was being attached to the implementation of Agenda 21 by the academic community, think-tanks, industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the efforts of such groups should be integrated into the activities of the Commission and of the Organization. However, given the absence of clear commitments on the part of the developed countries, it must be asked whether the United Nations could or would act on the decisions taken at the Conference.

3. The current world economic order placed the developing countries at a disadvantage. The ecological crisis required global economic adjustment, with the developed countries bearing the brunt of the burden, since they had been mainly responsible for resource depletion and pollution. Such adjustment should be achieved by a reform of international economic institutions and a reduction of the current massive financial flows from the developing to the developed countries, as well as an improvement in the developing countries' terms of trade and a resolution of their debt crisis. Many developed countries had recently announced cut-backs in foreign aid, and the resources available under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had been drastically reduced. Furthermore, the mandates of United Nations agencies were being broadened while their resources were stagnating. If the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance (ODA) was not met, some developing countries might be forced to ignore the commitments they had made at Rio de Janeiro. Environmental issues must be linked to social equity and the alleviation of poverty.

4. The effectiveness of GEF as a financial mechanism to address global environmental problems would depend on the current restructuring exercise. GEF should focus on the mobilization and efficient use of resources and ensure effective and equitable representation on its governing body. It should also reflect enhanced coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. The recessionary trend in resource commitment for the restructured Facility raised questions as to the international community's readiness to address global environmental issues. The forthcoming GEF meeting at Cartagena should make that commitment clear.

5. Innovative financial mechanisms were needed to offset the increasing shortfall in resources for the implementation of Agenda 21. Some interesting proposals had been put forward, and the United Nations was well placed to deal with such matters. Transnational corporations should also be actively involved in the implementation of innovative financial mechanisms. He hoped that the High-Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development would make specific and pragmatic proposals on that issue.

6. In addition to the private sector, Governments had an important role to play in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Some Governments had announced their intention to purchase the international proprietary rights to certain environmentally sound technologies and make them available to developing countries. Governments also had an important role to play in the transfer of publicly owned technologies. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies should include the removal of barriers and the provision of information, incentives, capacity-building and finance.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

7. While his delegation supported the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the proposals for an agenda for development, he hoped that those initiatives would not marginalize, but rather reinforce and complement Agenda 21, and that sufficient resources would be forthcoming for the implementation of all of them. The eradication of poverty and inequities in the international system was crucial to the success of Agenda 21. Unsustainable patterns of consumption in the industrial countries and high rates of population growth in the developing countries must be moderated. Unsustainable levels of resource exploitation should be brought down, and fairer use should be made of shared resources, including the atmosphere and the high seas.

8. Some progress had been made on the issues of a convention on desertification, the Conferences on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and the sustainable development of small island developing States, and implementation of the Conventions on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, climate change and biodiversity. However, his delegation was concerned at the state of negotiations in the areas of climate change and biodiversity, particularly with regard to the utilization of GEF as an interim financial mechanism, in view of the decrease in contributions. He urged the parties to ban all shipments of hazardous wastes, including those involving recycling from developed to developing countries.

9. Malaysia had included in its 1994 budget various incentives to encourage the use of unleaded petrol and catalytic converters, donations to environmental protection organizations and the planting of forests. Malaysia was prepared to work with other countries to implement the forest principles drawn up at Rio by 1994 and hoped to cooperate with all concerned for the full implementation of Agenda 21.

10. Mr. TÖPPER (Germany) said that cooperation in environmental and development matters would be crucial to the maintenance of peace in the future. The proposed agenda for development, the Agenda for Peace and Agenda 21 were central elements in that regard, while the Commission on Sustainable Development was a key political instrument for implementing them. He welcomed the progress made by the Commission thus far.

11. Analysis by the Commission of voluntary national reports was a prerequisite for further goal-oriented decisions by that body. Commission members should devise common indicators for sustainable development so that national efforts could be compared more easily. The Commission must also promote greater coordination within the United Nations system in the field of environment and development in order to bring the Organization's programmes and structures into line with the priorities of Agenda 21. The proposed special conferences to be held prior to the Commission's second session and the ad hoc working groups on financing and technology should develop specific proposals for action to be taken at that session.

(Mr. Töpper, Germany)

12. Many countries, including his own, had begun to adopt measures to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which were about to enter into force. In the preparatory negotiations for the first conferences of States parties to those instruments his country was striving to ensure that decisions were taken for their implementation and further development. In that connection, Germany would continue to endeavour to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 25 to 30 per cent from 1987 levels by the year 2005.

13. Further work was needed on the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States in order to address their specific concerns and problems. It was also important to ensure that the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Barbados in June 1994, was a success.

14. The negotiations on an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, had reached a difficult stage, and the clear mandate of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the General Assembly must be fulfilled. Although States should acknowledge the global geographical significance of desertification, particular attention must be directed to the plight of the affected African countries.

15. The first session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had highlighted possible compromise solutions for the protection and maintenance of those stocks. The rights and interests of all countries concerned should be taken into account, bearing in mind the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

16. His delegation also hoped that the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development would yield considerable progress towards the goal of sustainable development.

17. Governments should not become bogged down in repetitive debate in the negotiations undertaken to follow up the Earth Summit, but ought instead to strive for the step-by-step translation of Agenda 21 into dynamic political action. The shared responsibility of industrialized and developing countries must always be borne in mind.

18. At its next session the Commission on Sustainable Development must consider the question of ecological structural change, particularly in the industrialized countries. In market economies, the integration of environmental costs into product prices would encourage manufacturers as well as consumers to move towards a more environmentally sound lifestyle. Ecologically fair prices also would stimulate the development of environmentally friendly and low-resource technology. The Commission should devise an appropriate mechanism for environmentally sound technology transfers, using, to the extent possible, traditional local technologies adapted to social and ecological conditions.

(Mr. Töpper, Germany)

19. He underscored the importance of capacity-building in the area of environment and development, to be achieved through support for the preparation of legislation, the creation of functioning administrations and the training of experts. At its second session, the Commission on Sustainable Development should agree on an adequate mechanism to ensure the efficient implementation of the forest principles adopted at the Rio Conference.

20. He acknowledged the disillusionment that had prevailed with regard to the flow of financial resources from North to South since the Conference. The limitation of available resources caused by the difficult world economic situation meant that donors and recipients must ensure that such resources were used efficiently. Governments must also display greater creativity and consider introducing such innovative instruments as environmental taxes and charges, to name but a few.

21. Every effort was being made to ensure that the replenishment and restructuring of GEF would be concluded by the end of the year in order to make substantial additional funding available for global environmental protection. A transparent and democratic decision-making structure must ensure that GEF provided a higher-quality financing mechanism for the conventions signed at Rio de Janeiro.

22. Public funding alone, however, would not be adequate: further private capital for sustainable development must be generated. Improved access to the markets of developed countries and improved terms of trade for developing countries would help the developing countries finance the tasks set out in Agenda 21. Failure to conclude the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations by the end of the year not only risked an increase in protectionism and the loss of resources, but also endangered the promising market-oriented policies that were being implemented in many developing countries. The Commission for Sustainable Development should press for agreement on clear and comprehensive international measures to promote a mutually supportive relationship between environment and trade. Such measures, which should be negotiated in the context of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) immediately following the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, must take development and environmental protection needs into account.

23. Recognizing that it was the responsibility of national Governments to implement Agenda 21, Germany was integrating ecological concerns in its economic and social policy, the objective being the sustainable development of the country within the European Union. It was to be hoped that the ecological reconstruction undertaken to create similar living standards in both parts of the country upon unification would encourage countries with economies in transition to tackle the massive clean-ups they, too, face. His country looked forward to further progress on the environment within the European Union and to expanding its efforts as a partner in global cooperation for sustainable development.

24. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados), speaking on agenda items 99 (a) and (b) on behalf of the 12 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) said that the CARICOM Governments fully supported the call for the elaboration of an

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, and noted the significant progress made to date by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee established for that purpose.

25. Some countries in the Caribbean subregion suffered the periodic effects of drought, exacerbated in recent times by climate change and variability. They were well aware of the catastrophic proportions of the problem of desertification, particularly in Africa, and were reminded of that problem every summer by airborne clouds of Saharan dust which deposited new and frequently destructive microbial particles on their crops. The members of CARICOM looked forward to the round of negotiations to be held in New York in January 1994 and to associating themselves with the eventual regime those negotiations would produce. They were flexible as to the structure such a regime should take, provided that it gave appropriate emphasis to the catastrophic dimensions of the problem of desertification in Africa while providing a balanced response to the needs of all countries affected by the problem. The CARICOM countries noted the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's decision 2/1, which urged that an instrument on Africa should be negotiated once the main structure of the convention had been defined, and adopted as an integral part of the convention, and that similar instruments for other regions should be negotiated without delay. They also supported the Committee's recommendation that a session should be held after the adoption of the convention in order to review the situation pending its entry into force, in particular with regard to the implementation of provisions adapted to the specific needs of each region.

26. The mandate in General Assembly resolution 47/189 to convene the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was of historic significance for the island nations of the United Nations and a matter of priority attention for the countries of the Caribbean Community. The process of defining the sustainable development needs of those States and recommending appropriate response strategies was well under way, and the members of CARICOM were heartened by the level of support shown for that process by the international community.

27. The CARICOM States welcomed the progress made by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its September session and believed that the constructive spirit of partnership that had prevailed augured well for a successful Conference that would demonstrate the seriousness with which those States took the commitments made at Rio. As considerable work was still required to make the draft programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing States acceptable to all parties, the findings of the additional research to be carried out by the Secretariat should be considered prior to the Conference itself. Informal consultations on the text of a "Barbados declaration" would soon begin with a view to facilitating the negotiations on the text at the Conference itself. The Caribbean Community urged the General Assembly to endorse the Preparatory Committee's request to convene a resumed session of that body from 7 to 11 March 1994 for the purpose of advancing the negotiations on the outstanding sections of the draft programme of action.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

28. The CARICOM Governments hoped that delegations to the Conference would be represented at the highest possible level, and they were confident that the Conference would produce concrete results and the institutional and other mechanisms necessary to translate those results into reality.

29. Mr. Arellano (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

30. Mr. AL-SANAD (Kuwait) said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had significantly enlarged the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), thereby underscoring the importance of the environment for social and economic development. In that connection, he welcomed the report of the UNEP Governing Council on its seventeenth session (A/48/25).

31. The environment in the Gulf region had been seriously damaged by the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The torching of the oil wells in Kuwait had created some 240 lakes of oil over 1 metre deep covering large areas of land and desert and constituting a serious hazard to the environment and human health. The cleaning up of those sites would be complicated by the presence of live mines and ammunition beneath the oil. A recent report by a team of geologists from Boston University had stated that large areas of land had been transformed into a kind of asphalt which had caused serious harm to birds, plants and crops; the effects of that damage might continue for decades.

32. The oil fires and oil spills had also inflicted severe environmental damage on the atmosphere and the sea, and in particular fish stocks, necessitating intensive, long-term monitoring and research. Even though the last oil fire had been extinguished more than two years previously, its long-term impact was still unknown; detailed studies of the affected population would be required, with particular attention paid to respiratory problems.

33. The environmental catastrophe deliberately provoked by the Iraqi regime had thus had serious social and economic consequences, including loss of job opportunities, particularly in the fishing and agricultural sectors, and health hazards. His delegation therefore appealed for strengthened international cooperation to respond to that catastrophe. In that connection, he reiterated his delegation's support for UNEP Governing Council decision No. 17/7 and commended the pioneering role of UNEP in coordinating the efforts of the United Nations system to deal with the impact of the catastrophe.

34. Mr. Mongbe (Benin) resumed the Chair.

35. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See), speaking on agenda item 99, welcomed the substantial progress made in following up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in particular, the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the establishment of a framework for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification and the convening of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

(Archbishop Martino, Observer, Holy See)

36. Due consideration must be given to the ethical dimensions of problems affecting developing countries, and specifically the small island developing States. There were important issues of justice involved in working out equitable access to the resources and technologies needed for development and in allocating the inherent costs. His delegation considered it a duty respectfully and forcefully to remind all States of the fundamental primacy of the human person when they considered environment and development issues.

37. As the Conference on Environment and Development had amply demonstrated, the concept of sustainable development must be applied to developing and developed countries alike. The latter's frequently wasteful patterns of consumption must be avoided. Although his delegation applauded the efforts being made to change habits, attitudes and consumption patterns, much of those efforts unfortunately consisted of lip service rather than genuine, concerted action. In pursuing the goal of equitable development, the emphasis must remain on the human person: a happy life demanded the satisfaction of basic needs for food, shelter and health care and required an environment of peace in which people respected one another, values took precedence over objects and the human spirit could express its artistic and aesthetic capacities.

38. Mr. CAMPEAU (Canada) said that the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been a first step towards the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. The Commission had taken a strong leadership role in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. One point emphasized at the first session of the Commission had been the importance of devising national sustainable development plans and strategies. Canada supported the suggestion made by New Zealand that a simplified approach to the Secretariat guidelines should be taken when requesting information from Governments on progress in follow-up to Conference recommendations. The Commission's multi-year thematic programme of work must respect linkages between development and environment issues. Canada also supported the decision to establish the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the high-level advisory board, whose roster of experts could play an important role in providing technical advice to numerous intergovernmental bodies.

39. Furthering the sustainable development agenda depended in large measure on local and national efforts, and obstacles to their implementation at the national level must be eased through international cooperation. Government policies, while important, could not by themselves protect the world's fragile ecosystems, but must be effectively implemented. Constructive partnerships must be established and strengthened to foster the sharing of information and to gain new energy and insight. Canada had found round-table discussions very effective in translating policy into action.

40. Almost two years after the Rio Conference, the challenges faced by many developing countries remained urgent. A sound programme of work offered little reassurance to those facing malnutrition and lack of access to basic necessities. Environmentally sound technology must be made available to those

(Mr. Campeau, Canada)

in need of it and better use must be made of existing resources. The fact that UNEP had been given a leadership role in many of the areas defined by Agenda 21 would ensure that environmental research led to a new scientific consensus. The forthcoming Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would also serve as a test of the ability to translate words into action. The negotiations on an international convention to combat desertification should result in an effective instrument that would allow affected countries to focus their energy on that problem. As the African nations were the most vulnerable and the least able to combat the problems of desertification and drought without international assistance, Canada advocated a substantial convention with integrated regional annexes.

41. The United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had held its first negotiating session in July 1993. Canada was among the countries urging participants to adopt a legally binding regime and a model for compulsory dispute settlement. Accepting such a legal regime would be a challenge, but the international community had no choice but to learn to fish responsibly; it must also enforce the moratorium on drift-net fishing. His delegation noted with concern reports of activities in the Mediterranean inconsistent with the terms of General Assembly resolution 46/215.

42. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) should result in a tangible programme of action to provide adequate shelter for all and develop sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. Forestry was another critical area and considerable effort should be devoted to preparations for the 1995 review of forests in the Commission on Sustainable Development. Canada welcomed the proposal to establish an intergovernmental task force on forests.

43. Although much had been achieved in the area of sustainable development during the past year, integrating sustainable development into everyday life involved a profound shift in values on the part of individuals, Governments and nations. The world was now facing the consequences of having lived beyond its economic means for too long. That error must not be compounded by living beyond its environmental means. In the quest for sustainable development the most powerful tool was the spirit of international cooperation and partnership.

44. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that Benin had acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer during 1993, and that constitutional procedures for the ratification of four other international instruments in the environment field had been initiated. He urged the General Assembly to adopt a resolution prohibiting the movement of hazardous wastes from industrialized countries to developing countries.

45. With regard to desertification and drought, the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development had not met expectations in the Sudano-Sahelian region. The new international situation resulting from the end of the cold war could, however, result in greater resources to fight

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

desertification and drought, especially in view of the economic recovery noted in the industrialized countries. Without sufficient resources, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) could not fulfil its mandate, which had been expanded in the light of the recommendations of the Earth Summit. Benin was concerned by the trends evident in the current GEF negotiations which might lead to insufficient financing for projects to combat drought.

46. The organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the fourteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements had made it clear that it would be practically impossible to reach the goal of shelter for all by the year 2000. Recognizing that shelter was a basic element of an individual's well-being, the international community should support efforts to provide housing for the most vulnerable groups through technical assistance and the establishment of financing mechanisms for specific housing programmes.

47. Benin was pleased that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an international convention to combat desertification had met and hoped that the Second Committee would adopt by consensus the relevant draft resolution proposed for submission to the General Assembly. Some corrections to the French version of the text would be required, however, to bring it into conformity with the English version. His delegation also welcomed the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

48. While his delegation accepted the moratorium established by the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, it believed that the goals had not been fully met. Moreover, the non-participation of many developing countries - especially the least developed countries - because of insufficient resources had prevented the debate from being truly universal.

49. One year after the Earth Summit and the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, new and additional financial resources for environmental activities had not been provided at the desired level. That situation was a cause for concern, as inaction posed yet another threat to the survival of the planet.

50. Mrs. des ILES (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), thanked the Director of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for his lucid introduction of the reports of the Secretary-General relating to the United Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. While the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had anticipated the need for conservation measures based on cooperation among States, mechanisms applicable to the high seas had not been fully elaborated. In the case of straddling stocks, both coastal States and other States fishing on the high seas in areas adjacent to the exclusive economic zone were expected to agree upon the necessary measures either directly or through subregional or regional organizations. Thus high seas fishing had become one of the most pressing marine environmental issues on the international agenda.

(Mrs. des Iles, Trinidad and Tobago)

51. The Caribbean Community continued to hold the view that fish stocks and other living marine resources constituted one of the most important renewable resources, one which must be preserved for the benefit of future generations. For many CARICOM nationals, fishing was a way of life, and the fisheries industry was an important subsector in their economies. Community members would therefore give their full support to efforts to promote responsible fishing and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

52. The members of the Caribbean Community were encouraged by the progress made during the first substantive session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The Conference had already identified and assessed existing problems related to conservation and management of such stocks and had acknowledged the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the legal framework within which management regimes must be developed. The recognition that the movement of fish species in the world's oceans and seas was limited only by their biological and physical characteristics rather than by artificial boundaries should also facilitate the Conference's work.

53. The emerging regional approaches to cooperation in the management of marine resources were practical steps which should institutionalize cooperation between coastal States and other States fishing within the region and offered possibilities for satisfactory dispute settlement and enforcement. There could be no effective global network to preserve fisheries resources without the full participation of developing countries, although for many of those countries a substantial enhancement of their capacity would be required.

54. The members of the Caribbean Community had joined the consensus on the three recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the Conference. The international community must continue to promote the responsible use and preservation of fisheries resources, and the final compromise arrived at by the Conference should be universal in scope. Consequently, all fishing States and coastal States must be encouraged to participate in the Conference, and the participation of developing countries must be facilitated.

55. Mr. VÍLCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries expressed concern that the developing countries' need for fresh resources could not be met by the financial arrangements established within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including GEF and Capacity 21. The Central American countries understood the financial constraints on the industrialized countries, but in view of the accelerating degradation of the biosphere, the financing of a new international ecological order was imperative. To that end, the international financial institutions and multilateral development banks should also formulate more flexible macroeconomic policies.

56. The Central American countries welcomed the holding of the session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity following the signing of the Convention. They hoped that the session would lead to the convening of the first Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in which they were anxious to participate.

(Mr. Vílchez Asher, Nicaragua)

57. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) had been one of the first regional bodies to be established as a result of the peace process initiated at Esquipulas in 1987. In June 1992, the countries of the region had signed the Central American Convention on Biological Diversity and the Central American Convention on Climate Change and, subsequently, the Rio declarations and conventions, which they had since ratified or were in the process of ratifying. In addition, the Tegucigalpa Protocol to the Charter of the Organization of Central American States called for joint activities for environmental preservation and development. CCAD, UNEP and the Central American Governments had elaborated a draft basic law on the environment and sustainable development in consultation with regional experts. That text had been endorsed by the Central American Parliament and had served as a model for the environmental legislation that Central American countries had begun to introduce.

58. The Governments of the Central American countries had launched an integrated regional programme on environment and health in conjunction with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). In that context, they had held two conferences which had seen the adoption of country-specific development plans and programmes. Linkages between the environment and other fields had also been established. For example, the Central American Inter-Parliamentary Commission on Environment and Development (CICAD), composed of the presidents of national environment and natural resource commissions and legislative bodies, was seeking to incorporate the legislative dimension into sustainable development. At the thirteenth Presidential Summit, held in Panama in November 1992, regional agreements had been concluded on the transboundary movement of hazardous waste. The Presidential Summit held in Guatemala in October 1993 had adopted a regional convention on the management and conservation of natural forest ecosystems and the development and planting of forests. The convention stressed the potential for forest development in Central America and the wide diversity of species in the isthmus' tropical forests - the greatest variety in the world.

59. In striking contrast to that natural wealth were the more than 20 million Central Americans who lived in poverty, two thirds of them in rural areas. Poverty was aggravated by the deterioration of forests and local environments. Mounting external debt and low commodity prices further impaired those countries' capacity to make long-term investments in the sustainable development of natural resources. Central American soils were currently in danger of being over-exploited as a result of the cultivation of crops that could rapidly generate the currency needed for debt-servicing.

60. His delegation hoped that the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) would take into account the relationship between human settlements on the one hand and poverty and environmental deterioration on the other, and that it would formulate a plan of action to address the problems created by that situation. Preparatory activities for the review of the provisions of Agenda 21 relating to forestry, to be conducted by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1995, should be expanded. In that connection, the Central American countries welcomed the Malaysian proposal to establish an intergovernmental group on forestry questions.

(Mr. Vílchez Asher, Nicaragua)

61. Composed of representatives of Governments and environmental organizations, the Central American Council for Protected Areas had been established to monitor the implementation of the Central American Convention on Biological Diversity. The vastness of Central America's protected areas demonstrated how important the environmental component was in the establishment of peace and democracy in the region. The Central American countries were increasingly taking part in international forums to express their views on environmental issues. They wished to reiterate their hope that the financial commitments made at Rio de Janeiro would be honoured and that new and additional resources would be provided to ensure the implementation of the Rio agreements.

62. Mr. STEER (World Bank) recalled that, at the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development the World Bank had presented a fourfold agenda defining its role in the follow-up to the Rio Conference. The first task on the agenda was to assist member countries in environmental stewardship. Since the Earth Summit the World Bank had committed a record $2 billion for projects specifically designed to strengthen countries' capacities for environmental management, nearly doubling its commitments and increasing its lending 30-fold. That trend was expected to continue.

63. Many of the Bank's borrowers accorded high priority to environmental issues. More than 100 Bank-financed environmental or forestry projects were currently being implemented in over 50 countries, representing Bank commitments of some $5 billion and total investments of almost $13 billion. An increasing number of those investments were being utilized to implement environmental action plans, which had been completed or were being prepared in almost all the recipient countries of the International Development Association (IDA). The World Bank was prepared to play a strong financial and advisory role in the implementation of the plans.

64. The Bank's second task was to assess and mitigate adverse impacts of Bank-financed projects. In the period following the Rio Conference, the Bank had strengthened its capacity to make environmental and social assessments and had learned some hard lessons. Much remained to be done in that area, and the Bank was working to build capacity for environmental assessment and analysis at the country level. It was also conducting a comprehensive review of all resettlement components of Bank-financed projects.

65. The third element of the agenda involved building on the positive links between development and the environment. The guiding principles in that endeavour were that reducing poverty and developing human resources were essential for environmental sustainability and that promoting the efficient use of resources benefited both the environment and the economy. Since the Rio Conference, the Bank had actively sought to expand its activities on both fronts.

66. The fourth task was to help countries address global environmental challenges, primarily through the Bank's role as an implementing agency for GEF. The past 12 months had been crucial for GEF, and it was hoped that a restructured and financially replenished facility would emerge from the meeting

(Mr. Steer)

of more than 70 Governments to be held at Cartagena, Colombia, in early December. Donor countries had already agreed on a target of $2 billion for GEF II, an amount that was 2.5 times the Facility's current size. It was hoped that questions relating to the Facility's governance would be resolved at Cartagena.

67. The Bank was building its skills base in order to equip itself for the tasks it had assumed. The number of environmental specialists working at the Bank had increased from less than 10 in 1986 to the current figure of 200. The Bank was also building partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and other agencies that had complementary skills and experience to offer, and with the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. The Bank also hoped to draw on the expertise of NGOs much more than it had in the past. More importantly, it was taking a more participatory approach to its activities in the field.

68. The World Bank had been actively working with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, UNDP and UNEP to define ways of improving coordination and cooperation among donors, agencies and developing countries at a time of increasing demands on scarce resources. The Bank believed it could play a constructive partnership role within the United Nations system in the preparation of an international convention on desertification and had published a document that could help countries design and implement cost-effective policies to control land degradation.

69. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States offered another opportunity for partnership. The Bank was already actively assisting small island developing countries and had recently prepared a paper enumerating the services it could provide to them. A more detailed account of World Bank activities in the field of the environment had been circulated to Second Committee members.

70. Mr. RONNENBERG (Marshall Islands) said that his delegation fully supported the statements made at the 36th meeting by the representatives of Colombia, on behalf of the Group of 77, Vanuatu, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and New Zealand, on behalf of the members of the South Pacific Forum that were also States Members of the United Nations.

71. The deliberations of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been followed closely by his delegation. The fact that so many Pacific delegations had attended demonstrated the importance the region attached to the Conference. As much remained to be done, his delegation endorsed the decision taken by the Conference at its second session to hold two further sessions in 1994. Unfortunately, the scheduling of those sessions conflicted with the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development and with a religious holiday observed by certain delegations. It was to be hoped that greater flexibility would be shown by the larger delegations in the future so that such scheduling conflicts could be avoided.

(Mr. Ronnenberg, Marshall Islands)

72. His delegation hoped that agenda item 99 (c) would be included in the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly under its full title.

73. Drawing attention to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, he noted the record attendance by the Pacific delegations at the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. As there had been insufficient time for a full discussion and negotiations, his delegation agreed with the representative of Vanuatu that a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee should begin with negotiations. Priority should be accorded to completing the action programme and beginning work on a final declaration. The Marshall Islands had prepared a National Environmental Management Strategy which covered a wide range of issues that would be considered by the Conference and would form the basis for the country's follow-up to the Barbados Conference.

74. The draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda items 99 (b) and 99 (c) were the fruit of much hard work, and he hoped they would be adopted without a vote. His delegation also wished to express its gratitude to those countries which had helped to enable the developing countries to participate in the sessions of the Preparatory Committees for the two conferences, and urged countries in a position to do so to make further contributions to the relevant voluntary funds.

75. Mr. BETI (Observer for Switzerland) said that the proceedings of the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been satisfactory, particularly the discussions in the high-level meeting. The high-level meeting should be maintained and strengthened through, inter alia, genuinely flexible, interactive debate, fewer general statements and innovative guidance of the kind provided by the Commission's Chairman at the first session. The practice of elaborating a final statement along the lines of the Chairman's summary prepared for the first session should be continued.

76. One of the most important messages of the Rio Conference had been that consistency was more vital than ever, both within the United Nations system and at the level of national and international policy. The Commission on Sustainable Development should provide a forum for such consistency at a high political level. In an effort to achieve consistency at the national level, his Government had established a flexible, horizontal mechanism for the coordination of sectoral sustainable development policies in which non-governmental bodies could also participate.

77. In preparing for the second session of the Commission, widespread use should be made of a composite sustainability indicator, the need for which was becoming increasingly obvious. The complexity of the sustainability question must also be reduced. His delegation welcomed the preliminary work done in that regard by the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). With regard to the Commission's information requirements, a "peer review" mechanism which operated on a voluntary basis would greatly enhance the transparency and effectiveness of the Commission's work.

(Mr. Beti, Observer, Switzerland)

78. His delegation would participate actively in the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification and would support its ad hoc secretariat. The draft resolution before the Committee on that subject was the fruit of very difficult negotiations conducted at the most recent session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, and reopening that consensus text to discussion might impede the work of that body. His delegation hoped that the main text of the Convention and the annex on Africa would be completed by the June 1994 deadline set by the General Assembly and that the elaboration of other regional instruments, particularly those for Asia and Latin America, would progress rapidly. He was not opposed to "interim arrangements" if a prompt start was made. The idea could then be considered further at the Committee's third session, taking into account the content of the Convention once it was more clearly established.

79. His delegation did not support the opening of a new window in the Global Environment Facility to finance projects to combat desertification. Existing facilities and windows, particularly those for biological diversity and climate, could be used to finance activities to combat desertification. In any case, the opening of a new window should not be contemplated until the Facility's restructuring had been completed. Switzerland's long-standing support for a convention to combat desertification could be seen in its secondment of an expert to the ad hoc secretariat, its contributions to the Trust Fund for Preparatory Activities, its organization of courses in negotiating skills for members of the Preparatory Committee for the Rio Conference, and the location of the ad hoc secretariat in Geneva free of charge.

80. Mr. CUI Tiankai (China) said that the developed countries should fulfil their commitments under the Rio agreements to increase ODA, create a favourable international economic environment, provide new and additional financial resources for environmental protection, and transfer environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries on favourable terms.

81. His delegation welcomed the decision by the Commission on Sustainable Development to establish two intersessional working groups. Those bodies should conduct in-depth studies on the developing countries' needs and the reasons for their lack of access to resources and technology. His delegation hoped that a forward-looking approach would be taken in the final stages of the restructuring and replenishment of GEF.

82. He welcomed the work done by the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Those three forums should be given due attention by the international community.

83. His delegation supported the formulation of an action-oriented and viable action programme that was adapted to the unique situation of small island developing States, and based on the Rio agreements. Despite the progress achieved in that regard at the first substantive session of the Preparatory

(Mr. Cui Tiankai, China)

Committee for the Conference, differences persisted over the preamble of the final document and the section on implementation. He therefore hoped that the Second Committee would agree to the proposal to hold a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee.

84. Referring to the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on desertification, he said that the developed countries should provide new and additional financial resources to help the developing countries fulfil their obligations under the future desertification convention, including the implementation of national and regional programmes. Surely, agreement could be reached before June 1994 if all parties adopted a positive, flexible and practical approach.

85. His delegation supported the goals of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Countries should participate in the Conference on an equal footing and negotiate in good faith within the framework of General Assembly resolution 47/192 and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The outcome of the negotiations should take into account the special needs of the developing countries, which should be able to fish on the high seas without discrimination and with the support of international agencies and the developed countries.

86. His Government, which had always attached importance to environmental protection, had begun to study ways and means of following up the Rio Conference almost immediately. In September 1992, it had promulgated a 10-point environment and development strategy which took into account Agenda 21 and China's specific situation. In November 1992, the National Peoples Congress had ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a Committee on Environmental Protection had been established in early 1993.

87. Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, because of its broad mandate and long experience, UNESCO was involved in many aspects of the follow-up to the Rio Conference, with particular emphasis on Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNESCO had sought to reorient its existing programmes, revising strategies and action plans which had subsequently been endorsed by a number of intergovernmental bodies in the environmental field and by the advisory bodies for the programmes of UNESCO's Division of Earth Sciences.

88. UNESCO had launched four intersectoral initiatives that would establish new directions across established programme lines: sustainable development, biological diversity, capacity-building and environment and development information. The Director-General had appointed a committee of outside experts to promote those initiatives.

89. In the meetings on follow-up to the Rio Conference, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development had appointed UNESCO Task Manager for coordination within the United Nations system of activities relating to two chapters of Agenda 21 that dealt with science and education. UNESCO had

(Ms. Ashraf, UNESCO)

established focal points with NGOs and other organizations for the exchange of information in order to implement the environmental education elements of Agenda 21.

90. Agenda 21 stressed the key role of education and the sciences, including the social and human sciences in achieving sustainable development. Culture and communication, the two other areas of UNESCO competence, could also make a major contribution to that end. The follow-up to the Rio Conference was changing the United Nations system as a whole and the work of UNESCO in particular. UNESCO activities in the areas of desertification and drought, the sustainable development of small island developing countries and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks were described in detail in a longer text which she had circulated to delegations.

91. Mr. AL THANI (Qatar) said that environmental degradation was one of the major challenges facing mankind. There was increasing recognition of the adverse environmental impact of certain human activities, particularly in the industrial countries, and of the importance of modifying such activities so that nature could recover its vitality. Various conventions and protocols had been concluded or were under negotiation on such issues as the ozone layer, the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, and large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing. In that connection, he welcomed the decision to convene the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

92. With the world's population expected to grow as high as 10 billion while natural resources remained limited, man could not continue to destroy the life-giving attributes of the planet by polluting the atmosphere, poisoning the water supply and exhausting the soil. Qatar shared the concerns of other countries regarding the environment and supported all international efforts in that field. His country had enacted legislation and established institutions for the protection of the environment, in particular the sea. Qatar had acceded to a number of regional and international conventions on pollution, particularly oil pollution, and was endeavouring to heighten environmental awareness, especially in the wake of the environmental catastrophe caused by the Gulf crisis. His country had signed - and hoped shortly to ratify - the Convention on Biodiversity and was examining the other protocols relating to that issue.

93. Drought and desertification threatened some 900 million of the planet's population, particularly in the arid and semi-arid regions of Africa. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 had laid new foundations for international cooperation to combat those problems. He expressed his appreciation for the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa at its second session and hoped that the Committee might complete its work within the specified time-frame.

94. In conclusion, he urged Member States to continue to broaden international cooperation on the environment while making optimum use of the possibilities afforded by technological progress, and to ensure that environmental

(Mr. Al Thani, Qatar)

considerations were taken into account in development plans. All efforts should be made to halt adverse trends and to provide ample technical and financial assistance to the countries most affected by environmental degradation.

95. Ms. BELMAR (Mexico), speaking on agenda item 99, said that genuine commitments to enhance cooperation and incorporate the concept of sustainable development as a basic feature of national economic strategies were essential. Environmental issues should be viewed in a broad context within the framework of development strategies.

96. In view of the major challenges facing the Commission for Sustainable Development, an adequate infrastructure was needed to enable it to carry out its work. The high-level segment of Commission sessions should continue to provide a forum for a political dialogue by national officials responsible for development and environmental strategies.

97. The establishment of working groups on financing and the transfer of technology would significantly contribute to the implementation of the agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, provided that the working groups focused on specific topics in Agenda 21. Discussions on financing should identify ways to involve the Bretton Woods institutions and the Global Environmental Facility. A cross-sectoral approach to financing should be adopted. She was pleased to announce that her Government would be able to prepare its report in time for the next substantive session of the Commission.

98. She welcomed the progress achieved by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification; while drought and desertification certainly were priority concerns for Africa, the global character of the proposed convention must be borne in mind.

99. The forthcoming Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States would focus on the vulnerability of those States to climate change. Her delegation fully supported their efforts to achieve sustainable development and agreed that conditionality should not be a factor in the allocation of financial resources for that purpose.

100. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, she endorsed the view that high seas fisheries should be governed by the principles of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. She also welcomed the progress made in an international code of conduct for responsible fishing, which should take into account developments in the law of the sea, in particular, regarding the sovereignty of coastal States and their resources within the exclusive economic zone.

101. In conclusion, her delegation was confident that a spirit of good will and compromise would prevail in the negotiations to implement the agreements reached at UNCED.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.